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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)
SUBJECT: UDPS MOVES TOWARDS ELECTIONS KICKING AND SCREAMING

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

11. (C) Summary: In a series of meetings, Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) officials said the long-time opposition party will participate in the upcoming national DRC elections and is planning to hold a national congress in February. These same officials, however, complained bitterly about perceived unfairness in the current transition process and about their exclusion from key governmental institutions. UDPS officials also continued their call for reopening voter registration centers to enroll UDPS supporters who they claim boycotted the process. End summary.

Some Party Officials Bow To The System - Reluctantly

12. (C) PolOff met February 1 with UDPS spokesman Jean-Baptiste Bomanza to discuss the UDPS's possible participation in the DRC's elections. Bomanza began the meeting by recounting the UDPS's history as the opposition to former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. He charged (comment: erroneously) that his party had been "unfairly" excluded from the negotiations setting up the current transitional government and was being kept out of the political process by those now in power, particularly the PPRD (the party of President Joseph Kabila). PolOff reminded Bomanza that it was the decision of the UDPS and its leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, to decline ministerial and parliamentary seats offered to it at the beginning of the transition and to boycott the voter registration process during 2005. Bomanza countered with the frequent UDPS refrain that the entire transitional government, as well as the electoral process, was being manipulated and corrupted by other political groups, and therefore the UDPS wanted no part of what it views as an illegitimate system.

13. (C) Asked what it would take for the UDPS to participate in elections, Bomanza repeated the standard demand, i.e., the Independent Electoral Commission should reopen voter registration centers so that those who had boycotted the process (on the orders of Tshisekedi) could now register. PolOff explained that the CEI had already decided that it would not restart the registration process because doing so would jeopardize the entire electoral calendar. Bomanza protested that CEI President Abbe Apollinaire Malu Malu was simply doing the bidding of the PPRD and the decision was meant to exclude the UDPS from elections. (Comment: Aside from the legitimate timing and logistics issues posed by the UDPS demand to reopen registration, current registration numbers indicate very high rates in the party's strongholds in the Kasais, indicating that party followers disregarded Tshisekedi's boycott call pretty much en masse. Moreover, any

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party officials who did not register to vote and wish to run for office will be registered by the Independent Electoral Commission at the same time they sign up as candidates. End Comment.)

14. (C) Bomanza ultimately admitted, however, that the UDPS will take part in elections despite what it sees as an institutional bias, but will continue to demand that the CEI reopen registration as the party did not believe claims that doing so would delay elections. Bomanza also said Tshisekedi would be the party's presidential candidate, and that the party would hold a national party congress in Kinshasa, most likely in February.

Someone Must Be Responsible, But Not Us

15. (C) On February 2, PolOff met with UDPS National Committee President Valentin Mubake, who made many of the same claims of corruption and unfairness against the transitional government. Mubake said the current government should not be allowed to organize elections because it had not achieved the main objectives of the 2003 Sun City Accords (which established the transition), notably to provide security throughout the country. Mubake said current unrest in the Kivus was evidence that the transitional government had not accomplished the goal of establishing peace in the DRC.

16. (C) Mubake criticized the International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) for "breaking its promises" to the UDPS. Mubake (comment: incorrectly) argued that the CIAT had agreed to reopen voter registration after the constitutional referendum in December, and later reversed its decision. Mubake said it was clear the international community is working against the party by calling on it to

participate in elections without providing the same opportunities as all other Congolese political parties.

17. (C) Mubake later claimed the electoral process was flawed because of how electoral districts will be demarcated and how seats in the National Assembly will be assigned. Mubake presented two prior censuses -- which he claimed were conducted by a Belgian professor and the Ministry of Interior -- demonstrating that population figures in the two Kasais (which are UDPS strongholds) were much higher than what official registration figures from the CEI showed. Mubake argued that the CEI figures were fabricated and therefore would disadvantage the UDPS in areas where it would win the majority of votes.

18. (C) Mubake said the UDPS will participate in national elections, but the options being presented to it by the international community were problematic. Mubake said the UDPS was left with two stark choices: boycott the election process in its entirety, or participate in elections under current conditions. Mubake said the UDPS wants to find an option between these two "extremes"; that is, a "political" alternative which provides the UDPS with representation in the transitional government and which mandates the reopening of voter registration -- both of which have been previously rejected. While reiterating the UDPS's decision to take part in elections, Mubake at the same time warned that if the party determines the process is "flawed" or "inequitable," the UDPS may decide to withdraw entirely.

Presenting Excuses

19. (C) UDPS Secretary General Remy Masamba, the self-declared leader of the party's "pragmatists," took a more reasoned approach. Declaring that the UDPS is prepared to accept the CEI's decision regarding registration, Masamba told PolCouns January 30 that Tshisekedi has instructed him to prepare both a party conference and his presidential campaign. Masamba said he is concerned that Tshisekedi's poor health will effectively keep him from campaigning, which might, he speculated, be one reason that Tshisekedi has remained adamant about not taking part in the process. Having a presidential candidate who only makes pronouncements from his house in Limite (Kinshasa) would be almost worse than no presidential candidate at all, Masamba said, but admitted that he doesn't believe the party will nominate anyone other than Tshisekedi. Masamba said that, aside from health, Tshisekedi might be reluctant to campaign actively because

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the UDPS does not have genuine widespread representation in all eleven provinces, and arriving in a provincial capital to a lackluster reception would be unacceptable to Tshisekedi.

10. (C) Finally, Masamba pointed to financial constraints which are limiting his ability to organize a conference, much less conduct a campaign. He noted regretfully that if only the UDPS had taken part in the transition it would have been able to accumulate resources which could now be used for campaign purposes. Nonetheless, he said he would do his best to organize a conference in February, since this needs to take place before registration of presidential candidates begins (which could be as early as the end of this month or the first week of March, once the electoral law is adopted). When PolCouns asked if Masamba really believed that Tshisekedi would go to the CEI offices to register as a

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candidate, he glanced around, lowered his voice, and said that he did not believe that Tshisekedi would "demean" himself by doing so -- after all, Masamba added, Kabila probably won't go in person so why should Tshisekedi? In response, PolCouns reminded Masamba that unlike Tshisekedi, Kabila is president of the country, and already registered to vote besides, which means that he doesn't need to obtain

voter identification which can only be issued at the CEI office. Looking startled, Masamba agreed.

Comment: Stage Is Set

11. (C) If the UDPS takes part in elections and Tshisekedi loses, the party will claim that the elections were not free and fair, and will contest the results. If the party doesn't take part in elections, it will claim the same thing. Either way, we anticipate problems -- possibly even some violence -- from the UDPS before and after elections.
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